

stored to his office as cup-bearer, and the baker was hanged. Joseph had asked the butler to be kindly remembered to the king when he was restored to his place, but he forgot Joseph's kindness until two years later when Pharaoh had two dreams which none of the wise men of Egypt could interpret. Then the chief butler thought of Joseph as one who could interpret dreams and Pharaoh at once sent for him. Pharaoh's two dreams and Joseph's interpretation thereof are known to all Bible readers. The advice of Joseph to store away into barns one-fifth of the corn each year during the seasons of plenty pleased Pharaoh and his ministers and was promptly acted upon as we learn from this lesson.

Meaning and Application of the Text

38 And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?

Joseph had expressly disavowed his own wisdom in interpreting the dreams of Pharaoh, giving the honor and power to God. This impressed Pharaoh as an evidence of honesty and sincerity and at once won his confidence. It was a widespread ancient belief that all power to interpret dreams was from God, that it was not due to any native ability in man, but a divine revelation. The Babylonian queen and Belshazzar shared in this belief. See Daniel v: 11, 14. Of course Pharaoh did not have a pure and lofty conception of the God by whose wisdom Joseph interpreted dreams. It should be observed that Joseph was not ashamed to acknowledge God even before this heathen king, and that the religion which he professed, instead of a hindrance, was a help to him, the very key that opened the door to all his successes. His faithfulness at one time sent him to prison, but that same fidelity to God which sent him to prison now exalted him to the highest position it was within the power of the king to grant. The one thread running thru this narrative, visible above all others, is *faithfulness*. Again we emphasize this truth, and once more impress upon all young people, that with Joseph it was not a matter of "luck," as some would say, but *faithfulness*, always and everywhere. We must forever get away from the idea that there was so much of the divine element in the life of Joseph as to remove him from every day present life. Such is not the case. We may emulate his virtues and *attain* to them.

39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:

40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.

Pharaoh is about to give Joseph a position next in power to the king himself. He was to be over the royal palace with its officers and its affairs. None in the kingdom should be greater than Joseph, and his orders were to be obeyed without question. The position gave Joseph a splendid opportunity to work out his plans as a statesman. Was he a statesman? He certainly was, and one too that it would be well for some of our modern would be statesmen to learn from. His character and his methods would be a noble example for our men in office. Of course we are not surprised that Pharaoh saw at once the wisdom in making Joseph the chief manager of the affairs of the nation. He recognized in him the wisdom and the power of his God, beyond that of any other man in the kingdom. What a blessed thing it would be if our rulers would be thus guided in making government official appointments. We need men in office in whom the spirit of God is.

42 And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck;

43 And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.

44 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

Joseph had at last found his place. A little while ago he was in prison, now he occupies the highest place next to the kingdom in the vast empire of the Egyptians. It is pleasant to trace the hand of providence in this whole narrative, but we must not make the mistake in thinking that it was a blind force that brought Joseph to this position. He himself had much to do with it. Suppose he had not been faithful in the little things as a slave and a prisoner; suppose he had not resisted the temptation in the house of Potiphar, he would never have reached the place next to the king. It was in Potiphar's house as a slave and in the cell as a prisoner where the character of Joseph was tested. Here is a striking illustration of what the Savior taught hundreds of years afterwards, that those who are faithful in a few things will be made ruler over many and larger things. Ability and fidelity as a rule bring a person to the place he is worthy and competent to fill; it may be thru slavery and prison life, but it is a sure way wherever it leads. The only sensible thing for young people to do is to perform well the duties next to them and make the best possible use of the opportunities for self-improvement and growth in character. There are always places open for those who live as Joseph lived. He did not need to seek the place; the place sought him, and that is always the case. If one wants to get to the top of the ladder of life he must begin with the first round.

45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-paaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.

The new name of Joseph meant "the bread of life," and of course was very appropriate. The woman given as wife belonged to a family of high rank, and in this Pharaoh again honored Joseph. Of course Joseph did not compromise his religion with idol worship. Thru out the narrative he is represented as remaining true to the God and religion of his fathers. Joseph was indeed "bread of life" to all the Egyptians and to people of other lands. Every child of God should strive to be worthy to bear such a name, a name that is synonymous with doing good to others, living for others, a blessing to all who come under our influence and whose lives our life touches. There are hungry people all around us, perishing for the bread of life, hungering for help, yearning for sympathy, for love, for comfort, and in a large sense we should be "bread" to these hungry souls.

46 And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.

47 And in the seven plentiful years the earth brought forth by handfuls.

48 And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same.

49 And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number.

Joseph at once entered upon the duties and responsibilities which the government laid upon him, and how well he carried out the plans and sequel of the story shows. Read all of it. The lesson that comes to us with great force is that in every life there are seasons of plenty and it is the part of wisdom to avail ourselves of the years of fulness, gather up and lay in store for the years that will be empty, for such will surely come to us. Every life has its opportunities, its years of plenty and fulness, but, oh, how sad it is to see thousands waste these opportunities and idle away these years of plenty and when the seasons of emptiness come they are unprepared for the stern realities of life and give way beneath its duties and responsibilities. The following from Dr. J. R. Miller, directly bearing on this lesson, is so full of practical truths, especially for the young people, that we give it in full:

Seasons of Fulness

Youth is a season of fullness. It brings opportunities for education, for study, for reading, for forming habits, for the culture of character, for the establishment of principles and for preparation for life's work or business. A boy may see no use in studying mathematics, or grammar, or the natural science, but some day he will come to a point when this very knowledge stored away, lying unused all the intervening years, will become available and will be all that will save his life from failure.

A rich man's son may see no reason why he should learn a trade, a business, or a profession; he will never have occasion to work for his living. But some time the trade or profession will be the only staff on which he can learn amid the wreck of his fortune.

A young girl sees no use in studying her lessons so she wastes her school days in trivialities. By and by, she is thrown in society among intelligent cultured people. But alas! she has no preparation for such a position. She is ashamed of her ignorance. Every day brings its mortifications. She laid up nothing in the full years, and now when the hungry years have come, with their necessities, there is no storehouse from which to draw.

Thru the years of joy we should lay up comfort and strength for the years of sorrow that will surely come. All thru life's vigorous period we should be laying up in store those things that will make old age happy and beautiful. Religion may seem unnecessary for the young. They have no sorrow to comfort, no weakness to strengthen, no burdens to carry, no way to pass over. But it is better to have the lamps ready lighted even tho their beams may appear pale in the sunlight, for the days of darkness will surely come. Then how precious the light will be as it falls from the lamps of comfort which hang in our hearts! And how desolate and distressing our lives will be in such days if we have made no preparations in advance!

This lesson is capable of almost infinite application. Because it has not been learned and followed, countless lives break down in their mid day, in the first great stress. The hungry years, come on and there is no reserve in store. If we would be ready for whatever may come, we must use the opportunities which are given to us. In summer we must gather "driftwood for winter's fires." In harvest we must lay up for days of want. In wealth we must prepare for poverty. In time we must lay up treasure in heaven for eternal life. "Spread wide thy skirts" says an old proverb, "when heaven is raining gold."

Terse Teachings

One consecrated life may save a nation.
Spirit filled people make our best statesmen.
Our rulers should be God-fearing men.
The prison may be a step to the throne.
Every man will find his place.
The place will always find its man.
Those in Jesus Christ are given a new name.
In every life are seasons of plenty and emptiness.
Our life should be as bread to other people.
God rules in all the affairs of the world.

To Make You Think

(1) Is it true in any sense that Joseph was a "lucky" fellow? (2) What in the story thus far shows the real human element in Joseph? (3) Did Joseph do right in taking to himself a wife who was an idol worshipper?

Notice

The Pan-American Exposition is now at its best and in connection with the great Niagara Falls is well worth seeing. I will entertain brethren or others who write me thru this notice for \$1 a day each. This includes comfortable lodging with use of room at all times, bath, toilet, etc. Write a few days before coming.

JOHN E. STRAYER,

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